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RIT

An Ambulance Made of Whiskey

A Thesis film by Maria Victoria Mejia Yepes

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Film Production MFA degree
in the School of Film and Animation, Rochester Institute of Technology

Rochester Institute of Technology/ School of Film and Animation

College of Imaging Arts & Sciences

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I. PREFACE.

I began working on a career in music with no ambition outside of performing. As the time passed, I had the opportunity to consider different options and realized that I could complement my music career so that I could stand out from the other musicians. As a result, I decided that a good complement would be Sound Engineering.

One of the courses I was required to take was Sound Design for Media. I was given a film trailer with no sound and was asked to create an entire soundscape from scratch. This was my first time working on such a project, and it was an amazing experience. I found that I could stay working on it for eight straight hours without feeling annoyed or tired and that is how I came to the conclusion that sound design was my career goal.

I had no previous filmmaking experience before coming to the United States, and even the knowledge that I had in music production was not enough. The equipment and rules are very different. Thankfully I had the opportunity to join to many productions that forced me to learn equipment and improve my communication skills as well as expand my language. I must accept that some of the technical film terms that I now know in English, I do not know them in Spanish.

My two previous films were an exploration of my abilities as a storyteller, but I still felt that something was missing. I was not fully communicating my point of view of perceiving the world. I wanted to create projects in which sound and music could have an important role.

I tried to explore my storytelling through different genres, and found it difficult. At the end of my projects, I received good critiques for my sound and music selections but not for my story. *An Ambulance Made of Whiskey* was conceived from the idea of making an experimental piece driven by audio, which could describe a sensation more than a story, since I never considered myself a good storyteller and was not willing to go deep into my ideas, probably from fear of being exposed and criticized for my weaknesses in that area.

I decided to do an adaptation of a pre-existent book about psychedelic experiences. The more I worked on it, the more I turned it into my story. Suddenly, it began to require a challenging sound and music design from me.

There is a popular misconception that anybody can do sound for film and animation. It is so underestimated that the time frame for this process is the shortest length in the organizational schedule for a film, simply due to a lack of understanding of precisely what the term “picture lock” entails. Worse than that, I found out that only 5% of the sound engineer population is women. After discovering all these facts, I became even more motivated to achieve a good project which involved having a great production sound.

I was very lucky to have Ryan Meadows and Matt Ansini to help me out on production sound; however, I cannot say that I was lucky only for my sound. My entire crew was deeply committed to the project and without them, this would not have been possible. RIT gave me the opportunity to understand the many aspects of film and the knowledge to deal with the many difficulties of working with crew members from other cultures in order to achieve a quality project that could express my ideas in the right way and without any sense of personal embarrassment.

II. ABSTRACT.

An Ambulance Made of Whiskey is the story of Sven, a famous writer who loses his inspiration. He becomes a target of bullying by his fans and falls into a deep depression, shutting himself off completely from the public and from his family. He tries to commit suicide several times with no success.

Suddenly, after overdosing on a mixture of drugs, he enters into a surreal world in which he is confronted with his own death. While he is hallucinating, he is traveling in an ambulance on the way to the hospital. This affects his perception, mixing with the parallel world that he is experiencing. In the ambulance is Martina, an EMT who is concerned about Sven and who desperately tries to keep him awake while en route to the hospital.

Sven, knowing that this might be his last night on earth, tries to bond with Martina, but she is focused on doing her job. This experience makes Sven realize that he might not want to die, and that there are many things that he has not yet tried. As a defense mechanism, his brain creates an alternative reality which allows him to experience the different stages of a possible relationship with Martina, but in this reality, Martina is just a mechanical and lifeless character that shows no more than a superficial connection.

Soon, Sven finds out that he can't get beyond the first date, making him realize that the answer to fulfilling his desires is not in this relationship. The more he understands, the deeper he falls into another reality in which he finds Miss Captain Coffee Nirvana, his conscience, his inner voice or God for those who are religious.

Miss Captain Coffee Nirvana has the attitude of a nurturing and loving mother who doesn't have all the answers to everything, but can guide because she knows what is the best for Sven. After talking to her, Sven realizes that the answer to everything that he is looking for is in himself, and the decision of whether to die or not is his and his alone.

After a very hard night, Sven wakes up in the hospital feeling very confused. When Martina, the EMT, comes into his room, he apologizes to her. She gives him a notebook to encourage him to return to his career path. This notebook ends up as the source of his notes for his new book, *An Ambulance Made of Whiskey*.

III. ORIGIN.

The idea for this story sprang from my interest in sound, and from the constant search for giving sound the importance that it deserves in the structure of storytelling. I have always been a big fan of psychedelic films. I am very interested in color and sound stimulations, and how our brains react as a result of processing specific sound effects, creating visuals that might not physically exist.

I wanted to explore and be able to recreate a surreal world that required a very challenging sound-scape. I have always been interested in human perception, and how our ears process what

they hear. Having tight artistic and technical control of processing sound with equalizers, reverbs, and other effects carries the information of the qualities that define a specific place.

I worked on a similar project during my undergraduate thesis, to create a sound-scape for an animation from the characters' point of view in surround 5.1. This experience gave me an entirely new concept about the creation of sound effects and how brains react to low or high frequencies. During my meetings with my advisor Jack Beck, we discussed human perception under extreme circumstances. In this case, I was very interested in anxiety and depression.

These reminded me of my favorite book, *Opio en las nubes*, (Opium in the Clouds) from the Colombian author Rafael Chaparro. It tells the story of different characters dealing with extreme situations. I thought about a specific story in Chapter Two about a guy who was in love with the darkness of his life and how it prompted him to experiment with drugs.

I decided to contact the owners of the copyrights and tell them about my interest in the book and the desire to make a film about it. They granted permission for me to continue.

Throughout the process, I discovered how difficult it is to adapt a book to become a film. My advisor showed me how differently a story evolves in a book and how it needs to be a little bit more detailed than in a film, which has the visuals to tell it and does not need to have every detail verbalized.

I wanted to be as loyal to the book as I could, but I could not do it. My character's story did not have a regular ending. So I had to create something more than just the routine that the character had in the original story. I created a character driven and affected by his passions and not just a simple junkie. I wanted to develop a reason to justify his drug addiction.

Since I have never experimented with drugs or had an overdose, I decided to interview people who had personally gone through it. They told me how everything began as an innocent decision of just trying, thinking that they could keep everything under control. Some of them tried so many times to come clean and for some reason they fell and fell again. I continued my research, reading about the medical procedures for a drug overdose and what side effects various drugs could cause, and I found that many of these problems are treated in the wrong way: since these drugs

affect the brain, addiction needs to be treated as a mental disorder. Most of the time, the person is expected to stop taking drugs as if he or she could control it.

In many cases the addiction is so strong that the person dies just because the brain decides to shut down the heart for the lack of the substance. That is why, in other countries like Switzerland, there are drug centers that provide patients with clean heroin and with new needles and a nurse that injects them. This project helped to lower the mortality rate due to drug overdoses.

IV. GENESIS.

About the author.

Rafael Chaparro was born in Bogota, Colombia in 1963. He studied Philosophy and Literature at Los Andes University. He got his first job as the school's magazine editor, and later decided to create the Hojalata Magazine which showed his political views and was reason enough for the government to investigate him for having revolutionary and rebel content not appropriate for college students. After that, he began to work on TV in different shows with a comedic view of politics, like *Zoociedad*, *Quack*, and *La Brujula Magica*.

His entire focus was on storytelling, which led him to travel to France in order to continue his studies and then take workshops with Gabriel Garcia Marquez in order to improve his writing skills. He died on April 17th 1995 in Bogota, due to complications from having contracted Lupus.

About the book.

***Opio en las Nubes* (Opium in the Clouds).**

The Book *Opium in the Clouds* was the winner of the Colombian National Literature Award in 1992 and is well-known as the only novel by the Colombian writer Rafael Chaparro. The book reflects a time and way of life in the Bogotá of the 1990's; he uses poetry, theater, and follows the influences of *Nadja* by Andre Breton, and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* by Truman Capote. Chaparro focuses on three elements to tell the story of his characters: drugs, rock, sex and depression as a way of life.

The story talks about different lifestyles from several characters' points of view, whose lives reflect detailed aspects of their personalities and the reasons why they got stuck in drugs, bars and the love of life and death at the same time. The story evokes songs that identify each moment in the lives of characters like Sven, whose ideal is to find love and live for the perfect woman who would allow him to be comfortable with himself.

Chaparro wanted to experiment with language, which prompted him to develop a psychedelic narration, fast-paced and related to a theatrical set-up with how the human consciousness works. The creation of strong surreal images, as well as dialogue, mixes with the personality of its characters. This book became very popular with the younger generations and is a continuing subject for discussion on the Internet.

V. PRE- PRODUCTION.

Research.

My story was shaped around the idea of human reaction to negative situations and how they would choose to cope with depression and the pressure of modern society. Throughout my research, I interviewed people who went through severe episodes of depression or anxiety. Most of them talked about the need of drugs (legal or illegal) to cope with the symptoms. This led me to an investigation on the use of hallucinogenic substances and how they affect the brain.

I focused my attention on those who shared with me their drug addiction situations and how they tried to come clean. They told me how hard it is to return to normal society and move on with their lives. I understood that it seems to be difficult, since there is a lot of judgmental feedback and preconceived notions about the subject, and the fact that dealing with rejection has them feeling trapped inside a vicious cycle where they find shelter in returning to drug usage.

During this interview process, I met someone who shared many experiences that inspired me to present Sven -- a writer who, in order to deal with the criticism and rejection from his family and

the lack of a romantic relationship in his life, decides to try heroin and alcohol as a way of ignoring the feeling of consuming loneliness.

According to the NIH (National Institute of Health), heroin is an illegal drug which has long been proven to be highly addictive, and which is very popular for its rapid side effects. Heroin causes a distortion in perception that, according to the amount taken, could be fatal to the user.

To understand the effects of drugs, it is necessary to understand that the mind is not the same as the brain. The mind is the database of information that we have gathered since we were born in order to interact with others and with our environment in our lives. It is the registry of thoughts, conclusions, decisions, observations and perceptions that we have gathered throughout our existence.

A research from Heinrich Wilhelm Dove showed that the brain works with frequencies connected from hemisphere to hemisphere, causing our different changes of mood and reactions. Drugs like heroin, according to his study, have the power to dramatically change human cerebral tonal frequency and cause a wrong reaction to one's environment. When frequencies are changed, they also affect other senses, such as hearing: a heroin addict can become considerably more sensitive to noises and images.

Based on this information, Sven's profile was developed as a talented writer who had a bestseller at a young age, something that put him at the top of the most popular writers and helped him to build up an entire self-esteem based on good critical reviews. As soon as he lost those things, he began to feel alone and could not deal with it, entering into drugs until he got an overdose.

Script.

Trying to adapt a book to a screenplay was a big challenge, and some of the issues that I had during the process centered on understanding how a written story develops, as opposed to developing a visual story. In a written story, every detail is important, since you need to create a mental view of what you are reading, while in a visual story, you can use other ways to communicate than verbal.

Another challenge for me was the language. Spanish is my first language, and although RIT requires its students to have a good working level of English, I was missing a more colloquial way of expressing my characters verbally. For this reason, I had to have the assistance of my advisor and some of my American classmates. I wanted it to sound as natural as possible, but at the same time to keep a poetic tone that defined this character who was both highly intelligent and deeply depressed.

6.

11. EXT . WOODS - DAY

Sven and Martina are sitting under the same tree, Sven's wrist has a needle that is connected to a white long cable that doesn't have an end. His wrist is being held by Martina, but this time she looks different, her lips are red.

SVEN (V.O)
She looks like in the movies,
amazing eyes, fine hands.

She is holding an injection and flirts with him.

SVEN (V.O)
She smells like blood and roses.
That kind of scent that... makes me
dizzy, drives me crazy, that
perfume that taste like
midnight, and bloody wrists.

Sven touches Martina's face, and gets extremely close.

SVEN
Look at me baby, before I die.

The scenes that required me to work very hard on dialogue were the medical scenes, in which doctors or the EMT Martina treated Sven. I wanted to use the correct medical technical terms that are used in cases like this. For this, I consulted an ER doctor from New York City, a nurse from the Strong Hospital, and EMT's from the Henrietta Ambulance Service and the MCC Public Safety Building training personnel.

The story began with a writer remembering something that had happened in the past, but later, my advisor and I both thought it would be more interesting to tell the story while it was happening instead of going back to the past.

19. INT. BLACK ROOM

Everything is dark, there is PEOPLE TALKING in the background. Suddenly a barbie figure comes into the screen, talking to another one.

DOCTOR1

Breathing shallow...Blood pressure
70 over 40... pulse is very weak...
65... I think. I can hardly feel
it...

DOCTOR 2

We need to jump him, 20cc's
Adrenaline STAT, We're losing him!

DOCTOR 1

OK. Clear. I need to get an airway
going... got it!

Sven turns his head to the door and sees Martina standing at it, she sends him a kiss with her hands, Sven is so confused and bad at this point that his thoughts become public because he is saying them out loud.

SVEN V.O

A kiss with the sweet tip of her
fingers. I want to catch it

Sven stretches his arms as much as he can do to catch the kiss and smiles.

In the case of Martina, her dialogue was a group of sentences with flirtation or sometimes with a sexual connotation that could communicate how Sven was trying to create a female character in his hallucinations, but since his contact with women was at a minimum, he did not have much material or experience to work with.

Casting.

Through my experience at RIT, I saw that my graduate classmates looked for actors that sometimes were very good looking but their acting skills were not really strong. During my casting process, I paired up with some of my classmates who read the story and helped me to envision the characters and “flesh them out” more realistically.

Some of my classmates advised me to cast an actor who was regularly used for other SOFA productions, but he looked like a model, and I wanted actors who looked like regular people and who would, in my opinion, be more likely to help the audience to identify more strongly with the characters in my film.

Sven.

The search for this character was very difficult since it required a level of professionalism polished enough to understand how to represent a drug addict without over-acting. At the same time, I tried to look for somebody who looked average, a person who could connect with his audience and with whom his audience could identify. This is why I chose Ron Dufort, because he showed an understanding of the character and was a congenial collaborator. To me, he portrayed an average 30-year-old man who was once had a normal life and then got stuck and finally fell into depression.

Martina.

Martina has a dual personality: she is an EMT trying to do her job, and one night, while in the routine of performing her professional duties, she happens to meet a well-known writer. She feels committed to help and tries to keep him alive. During the entire night she has to deal with him trying to flirt and being impossible.

Martina’s second personality is the one created by Sven in his hallucinations, this character is the understanding of a woman from a male perspective. She is everything that Sven is expecting to get from a relationship but unfortunately he does not have the full power to get what he wants from her, and Martina ends up behaving like the women he met in his life -- always keeping at a distance.

In the first hallucination she starts out as a model, and she doesn't talk and doesn't have any reactions, but just does what Sven thinks a sexy EMT does -- checking his pulse, his heartbeat and whether or not he has a fever.

While the story develops, Martina relaxes and appears to become closer, starting to talk and touch. She says words that Sven would love to hear in real life but her attitude is completely disconnected from what she is saying. At the end, the last time they see each other in his hallucinations, is when she says goodbye by saying "I can live with or without you."

Captain Coffee Nirvana.

Captain Coffee Nirvana is the inner voice that tells Sven whether something is good or bad and allows him to write. This character is the source of Sven's talents and while he is growing he begins to lose contact with it.

Because of his ability to speak to his inner voice, Sven wrote a book entitled, "The Opium in the Clouds," and it was selected as a best seller. When Sven falls into depression, he loses entire contact with this inner voice, causing him to become incapable of writing again.

When Sven sinks deeper into his hallucinations, and meets with Captain Coffee Nirvana again. She reminds him how was life when he was connected to her, and how he does not need any other external force to keep it going, other than the creative power he has within himself.

Originally, Captain Coffee Nirvana was a male character on the book, his role was not to guide Sven at all, it was only part of his hallucinations and did not have any important purpose for the story. It was very important to me to turn him into a female because I wanted her to portray a motherly figure.

Locations.

Ambulance Studio B.

Most of the story happens in the interior of an ambulance. For this effect, we had three different locations, and one of them was the ambulance that Sven sees in his hallucinations.

For this one, Stephanie Clark, my production designer, built a replica of an ambulance interior in Studio B.



We used three walls and left one side open so we could project colorful images onto the walls to represent the division between reality and hallucination. Most of the shots in this location were close ups and medium shots.

Public safety building.

The other ambulance that we used was provided by the Public Safety Building training personnel at MCC.



It was an ambulance simulator, in which the back part was in a room. The building also provided the medical tools generally found in an ambulance.

This option worked very good for us because it allowed us to shoot for long hours without having the inconvenience of using an actual ambulance that was in service.

Henrietta Ambulance Exterior.



The third ambulance was provided by the Henrietta Ambulance Department. We needed exterior shoots of the ambulance while moving. In order to keep a disoriented look, we took extreme close-ups of some parts of the ambulance both in- and out-of-focus during the night.

Green spaces.

I chose to have nature to play an important role in Sven's dreams because I think nature is the closest we are to our real selves, and the entire purpose of this trip was for Sven to rediscover himself. It was also important to show a contrast between life and death. Sven was losing his battle and was able to see the things that really matter in the process.

Tree of Life.

The first time Martina and Sven meet in his dreams, the location is in the woods. Martina is sitting under a tree, everything surrounding her is green and she is sitting on a red blanket with her

EMT instruments, waiting for Sven. The location that we used was in Highland Park, for its tree diversity and for the surrounding green fields. These scenes required us to shoot during the autumn season.



Captain Coffee Nirvana's place.

This place is the last and most important stage of Sven's experience. I wanted to portray what some might understand as heaven or what I see as going deep inside our conscious selves. This is the point during which Sven connects back with his psyche again and concludes that his life is not as bad as he thought.



The place is a beautiful green space with a hill where Sven sees a lady sitting on a bench with a basket, having a picnic and drinking coffee.

The skies are white, and although it seems like a regular park or natural spot, it lacks of the regular sound effects that could be found in a place like this.

For this space, we decided to use Highland Park again, behind the historic Lamberton Conservatory, a Victorian-era designed building which had been restored only a few years ago. This was shot at the beginning of fall and it allowed us to have trees with full foliage, along with a wide variety of colors.

Street.



The story develops in the underground city of Bogota during the 1990's. There was a strong cultural development of punk rock pushing the young people to express their ideas and give bigger spaces to display and present the arts. It was well known that downtown was developing a big bohemian movement, and the streets where crowded with street musicians, storytellers and artists of all kinds. Later on, those artists were restricted to a single street that was closed to wheel transportation, encouraging people to walk and thus experiencing the performances more personally.

I wanted to keep the artistic look of it and chose the Village of Pittsford, which offers a huge range of red and orange colors that come from the shop windows during the night.

We were situated on a busy intersection so that Sven's face was touched by the reflection of the car lights. This effect was also supported with the lights on the film set.

On Sven's left side was a shop window with some tungsten and red lights that highlighted his hair. The window also worked well to provide a reflection of the cars passing by.

Limbo or Dark spaces.



Sven goes through an empty black space, but at the same time, he can still hear the background sounds of the ambulance.

At one point, he is lying down in the same position in which he was seen in the interior of the ambulance, and in other scenes, he is sitting up, staring at his muse and begging her to be with him, since he is unsure of what is happening to him and wants to stop his hallucinations. I wanted to

create the ambience of being in an unknown location with minimum visual stimulations in order to allow myself the liberty of creating an original sound scape. I hoped to create a feeling of fear in the character and, at the same time, have a situation that stimulates his sensations through sound effects. These scenes were staged at RIT's SOFA Studio A and Studio B.

Production Design.

Production design was a big part of the story. The biggest lift were the ambulance scenes. My crew and I discussed it many times to the extent that we were not sure about whether to build the interior of an ambulance mock-up, or find a way to shoot inside a real one.

The downside of shooting in a real ambulance are the time constrictions; we would be forced to shoot in blocks of two hours, which was not long enough, given the time needed to light and set up the equipment. We finally decided to build it, concluding that it would give us the freedom of going over the two-hour time limitation. We shot some scenes there, but it did not work out for what I envisioned.

We were still able to rescue some of what we shot in there and decided to use it as part of the hallucination ambulance, I limited the duration of those shots to avoid any comments.

We finally had the opportunity to contact the Public Safety Training Building, and they generously allowed us to shoot in their Ambulance Simulator, along with using their real ambulances for the exterior shots of the ambulance driving in the city. They also provided us with an EMT instructor who was present during the shoot as a consultant.

For Sven's house, I wanted to have a living space that could show his personality and profession. That is why, at the beginning, we show a clean living room, a library and some paintings on the wall. Later on, the camera moves downstairs to the basement, where it shows the character's current reality: a filthy place away from everybody in the darkness with garbage on the floor and a small table with a powder, a syringe, spoon and a lighter. We see books all over the place and bottles of whiskey and Sven sitting in front of a TV.

Wardrobe and Makeup.

Sven.

His wardrobe was very simple. Everything was chosen with the purpose of showing someone who doesn't have a sense of style and does not care about it. His hair was not combed or styled. The makeup was divided into two parts: one was Sven in the ambulance overdosing. We made him pale but with some color on his lips. We also added some cuts on Sven's arm that could show how many times he has tried to end his life. Those cuts were already healed. During his dreams, he has a healthy skin color and his cuts are open and bleeding.

Martina.

Martina wears an EMT uniform consisting of a white shirt and black pants, her hair is pulled back out of her face, and she wears almost no makeup.

For Sven's hallucination she had to look gradually sexier, so we slowly added some accessories to her uniform and changed her makeup, until the end of the scene in which she stops wearing it and changes to a green dress. The dress becomes greener when he is closer to the last level of his trip.

Captain Coffee Nirvana.

Captain Coffee Nirvana is an elegant and experienced lady who displays a motherly personality. She wears a blue dress with a coat and high heels. Her makeup is very soft to keep her conservative and approachable.

VI. PRODUCTION.

Committee.

To achieve the purpose of telling a story driven by sound required me to find people with storytelling skills and also with audio experience. My thesis advisor Jack Beck has both skills; we met weekly from the beginning of the project, at which time he gave me input during the development of the script. His experience allowed me to learn and avoid making obvious mistakes that can occur during a production.

I learned, with his assistance, that a book-to-film adaption is very complex, since the book specifies everything so the mind can picture to flesh out the story, while film uses a completely different language that avoids verbalizing the details and allows the viewing audience to create their own interpretations.

Skip Battaglia has experience with storytelling using different mediums, like animation, something that I thought could be helpful because I consider his imagination to be limitless and considered that he could give good feedback on that psychedelic part that I believed was essential to my project.

Lastly, but certainly not any less important, is David Sluberski. Because all-things-audio is his strength, he provided me with the technical knowledge and solid advice on sound design that was very useful through my process.

Shooting.

I needed a tangible difference between the real world and the dream world. For that, the camera angles and scene colors played an important role. For example, the scenes shot in the interior of the ambulance had to be very tight and handheld to keep the feeling of an ambulance in movement. In this case, the color temperature was cooler and the atmosphere was supported with the use of fluorescent lights. We also used a small tungsten light for Martina, to show the vitality of life in her face, as compared to Sven's pale appearance.

The dream scenes have the opposite in terms of color. I tried to bring out more vibrant colors. The angles were a matter of conflict at one point, from my ideas as a director and what my DP thought was feasible. For example, when Sven and Martina are positioned on a black background, I was looking for a slow zoom-in from the top where the frame began with their entire bodies as a wide shot and slowly moving in, to end up in a very tight close-up. It was not possible to do it because it was hard to frame both bodies, given the angle, and also it was not flattering for Martina's body shape, since her breasts spread out to the sides and she was wearing a dress with a V-shaped decolletage. Unfortunately, I only caught this later when we were already into the editing phase.

As a backup, we decided to start from a medium angle and zoom in, which allowed us to control the focus and to keep both bodies in frame. This was a shot that later worked very good combined with the music.

Directing.

This part of the filmmaking process was not very appealing to me, but in the end I learned to love it. I am a huge fan of the psychedelic era and I had always wanted to create a film that could tell a story without restricting myself to a regular development line.

I tried to make my actors feel free and relaxed, in order to perform and build a relationship with them with the purpose of helping them to feel comfortable on set. I wanted them to feel free to offer different options with regard to their performances.

We had rehearsals in which we developed each character's personality, and they were helpful enough to guide me in enhancing the dialogue to sound more eloquent, given my limitations with the English language.

My approach as director is to let my crew know that I want to work with them and that I am not looking to establish a hierarchy where I am bossing everybody around and diminishing their functions. I have been in other sets of some of my classmates in which I saw that attitude and I feel that display a considerable lack of education, and diminishes the understanding that film (as Howard Lester said many times) is a collaborative work. I gave my crew the freedom to communicate their concerns and ideas to me, to the point where they felt comfortable enough to bring their creative ideas to my project.

Unfortunately, through my learning of how to manage my work, I had a difficult situation with one of the crew who started developing a conflict with me from the beginning of the development phase, and as a result, I decided to let this person go for the sake of the working atmosphere of the project. Dealing with people who have strong personalities and inflexible opinions is always very difficult, and the fact that English is not my first language (which means that sometimes I get misunderstood) adds to it. This was a very uncomfortable situation.

Through this time, I learned the importance of choosing the right people to conform a crew that matches to my artistic view as well as the use of cast and crew contracts and having everything written down from the very beginning, as opposed to depending solely on a verbal agreement or non-written communication.

VII. POST PRODUCTION.

Editing.

I envisioned the editing of this film through three stages. The first one began with Sven at home and having his first hallucination. The second section showed another set of hallucinations separately from scenes of him inside of the ambulance, with the purpose of keeping the audience focused on the fact that he is going through this experience while fighting for his life on his way to the hospital. The third section had a set of hallucinations that are completely in surreal places and which resolved finally on him waking up in bed.

I had problems deciding on a transition between the last hallucination and Sven waking up. I could not follow my original idea because of a measurement mistake made during the shoot. I wanted to blend the angle of Sven's face in the woods with the angle of him waking up in bed.

As I mentioned before, I had a wardrobe problem with my actress, and I noticed during this stage that all of the shots that I did during that scene were showing 80% of her breast, and if it were not for that, the shot would have been beautiful. In the end, I decided to use the shots that showed less and place them during a shorter time. In the end, if I could go back, I would have tried to get both shots.

Sound Design.

Personally, this was the most interesting part of making this film. I wanted to show a big difference between the real world and the hallucination world.

The Foley process was a stage of experimentation. I recorded park ambiances, interiors of cars and trucks in movement, string instruments played with metallic objects, industrial ambiances, and a synthesizer.

For the ambulance scenes, I recorded the interior of an ambulance-in-movement ambience, with the siren on and off. This sound was placed entirely over those scenes, plus another layer of city ambience sounds equalized with the purpose of pushing them back and creating a perspective of hearing them from a long distance.

For the hallucinations, the room tone recorder for each was processed through different effects like Enigma, a plug-in that works with samples and reacts to impacts, creating a mixture of its own samples along with the original sound effects. That audio file was later equalized; I decided to apply a low- and a high-pass filter, creating an emphasis on the mid-range frequencies. I wanted to recreate a sonic sensation very similar to how the human ear perceives sound when the hearing takes place underwater or when the ears are covered.

I finally decided to add the ambulance siren sound effect processed through Enigma, this time with an Echo preset to keep the hallucinations attached to the real world.

The dialogue was also processed through BNR, a plug-in used to get rid of unwanted noise. In this case, I used it heavily to the point of affecting part of the frequency information. This, along with the ambiences and music, worked pretty well.

Music.

Having a rough idea of the sound design made me realize that the music had to be simple so that it did not interfere. During the stage of scriptwriting, I listened to Pink Floyd's "Echoes" album, experimentation with ambiences, sounds and instrumental pieces processed through effects. Most of it was improvised.

I kept the idea of wanting to utilize something similar for my own film soundtrack. Given my background in music, I must say I was fortunate enough to know many good musicians and have the opportunity to find performers who could fit in well with the kind of music that I was looking for. I decided to contact my friend and classmate Julian Benavides, an experimental musician from Bogota, Colombia. He and his band, Irissistencia, created very interesting pieces that worked great with the soundscape and gave me the space to bring my own music into the mix, as well.

Most of Julian's music was made with samples, guitar and vocal recordings. One of my favorite pieces is the one played by Captain Coffee Nirvana. This piece was a recording of Julian

playing guitar and one of his bandmates playing the kazoo near a river. The recording kept the background nature sounds that matched pretty well with the visuals.

Ultimately, I was very satisfied with how the music and the sound design worked together. Julian got the opportunity to show his work on this film in Mexico and was congratulated for his outstanding work.

Response to Audience Reactions.

It is difficult for me to express how I think my film was received. I noticed during the screenings that a lot of people connected to my speech, which also encouraged them to share with me a wide range of opinions so that I might understand their perceptions more clearly. They also cheered me up.

I had comments about how the story shows part of my culture and the magic realism from the Garcia Marquez books. Some other comments concerned how the story reminded them of 1960's-era movies, and how the colors and the hallucination had them interested in the character.

After this, I had a difficult time finding a good niche for my film, since it is not a typical narrative short film, and for that reason, it had not held the attention of very many film festivals. I recently decided to try submitting it to festivals that are open to more alternative stories and/or experimental works.

My film had a second screening in Bogota, Colombia, and the audience focused on the poetic language. This was greatly enhanced by the fact that they were familiar with the book and had the chance to connect better with the story and characters.

There were very strong comments submitted about the music and the sound design, and how interesting and important they were for the development of the story. Viewers still shared with me their opinions that the overall length of the final film could have been shortened.

They also shared with me that they liked the selection of the actor whom I had cast as the character Sven, and they mentioned that his acting was very convincing.

VIII. APPENDIX

Proposal

An Ambulance Made of Whiskey

Adaptation of 2nd chapter from the book “**Opio en las Nubes**”

a film by Maria Mejia Yepes

(Experimental- narrative)

Committee:

David Sluberski

Skip Battaglia

Chair: Jack Beck

Approved for Submission: _____

Synopsis

This is the story of Sven, a writer that for twists of fate ends up dealing with the worst situation in his life. He is in an ambulance because of a heroin overdose with high chances of dying.

He embarks on a journey of hallucinations imagining a whole new perception of the situation.

Facing the imminence of his own death, he comes to open himself to chapters of his existence, that so far, he never explore before to end up finding a goal.

Statement:

Opio en las Nubes is a very famous book in Colombia, well known for its non-usual narrative. Is an experimentation with language, and because of that has a fast psychedelic narration, related with theater and how our conscience works.

The Author Rafael Chaparro tried to create strong and surreal images that mixed with the personality of each character. He based his work on William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg's poetry.

Rationale.

By using the experience of someone who is having hallucinations, I am creating the opportunity to explore the perception of somebody who besides of having his sense altered by drugs develops a defense mechanism to avoid confronting his possible death.

Something that I will explore with visuals and different sound options that will lead me to explore acoustics and frequencies.

I always had an interest about how we perceive the world when our senses have been altered and our brain has to make adjustments in order to create an acceptable atmosphere.

This film will have two parallel worlds; The real world where Sven's body is reacting to a heroin overdose and the ambulance assistants are doing what they can to keep him alive, and the surreal world where Sven's perceptions changes radically because of his hallucinations.

This story will be mainly told by Sven, as a reaction to the extreme situation that he is dealing with.

TREATMENT

A black screen, supported by the sound of two guys and a woman talking, they are in a hurry, they speak very loud, in the background, the sounds of the street and music from bars outside.

Everything is perceived from the interior of an ambulance.

A bright light that accompanied by the sound of voices. This bright light attenuates and blurry spots moving can be perceived.

SVEN (V.O)

My name is Sven and I died
yesterday or maybe last week. I
really don't know, I don't know.

Sven seems confused trying to remember how he ended up in An ambulance.

SVEN (V.O)

I only remember bar lights, a
bathroom with vomit everywhere and
a song “Contigo o sin ti”.

Sven sees the assistants trying to help him, they are yelling each other trying desperately to save his life. A nurse appears and tries to help him to relax, he focuses on her lips because her look is not very clear, she seems blurry.

The nurse injects a needle on his wrist and Sven is shocked, he narrates in his head what he sees.

He wishes to have a physical contact with her. On his mind he describes her as beautiful as a Hollywood star.

He wants to talk to her, but she doesn't seem interested at all, Sven is adopting a "Macho" confident attitude trying to use “pick up lines” with her.

The nurse tries her best to do her job while dealing with him, she seems uncomfortable and tried to ignore him.

The screen turns black and goes back to the ambulance back and forth from his perspective, emulating how he is almost open and closes his eyes.

Seeing how close he is to die, Sven realizes how empty his life is.

He remembers how much effort he put to become a writer, with not very good results, his 6 times in the hospital for drug abuse, or how he never accomplished his dream of going to Latin America.

He pictures himself holding his diploma, a BA in Literature and Philosophy, he thinks how this piece of paper never helped at all.

He tries to accept his faith by sharing some of his thoughts with the nurse. He uses elaborated words to turn his situation into a flirty and erotic moment with her.

The nurse seems to be interested but is playing cold, he understands it as a “keep going” message. After an awkward moment of silence Sven narrates what is happening.

SVEN

The night was decomposed. Is
falling in pieces around me like an
absurd...

Absurd? mmm ok, Absurd card game
where definitely nobody wins.

The guys in the ambulance are confused about what he is saying, one of them asks him what talks about.

Sven seems to ignore that he is sharing his thoughts out loud. He is lost in his mind, He seems to go through different levels of emotion.

He reaches to the point where fear is all he can feel, he holds the nurse's hand and asks her to stay with him.

Closes his eyes almost dying. The nurse leans down getting really close to him (CU of her face) saying; “Relax babe!” and when she leans back her background is a white room.

Sven is confused, he thinks he is gone. Then he sees 4 guys from his POV with masks staring at him while he is lying. He turns his head and sees the nurse standing on the door, she sends him a kiss with her hands, he tries desperately to catch it and feels like almost falling.

The screen turns black, suddenly he wakes up in a green place surrounded by big trees.

Watches his feet and looks to the front where he sees a lady in the distance dressed formal, sitting on a bench. She is drinking coffee, Sven walks towards her.

The lady gives him what seems like a business card that says; "Miss. Captain Coffee Nirvana".

Sven asks her about the nurse or if it's possible to have a little bit more time so he can spend it with her.

Miss. Captain Coffee Nirvana asks him to drink a zip of her coffe and listen to the wind, while she plays "La Sabia", the sound of the music seems to come from the big trees.

MR. CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA

I love to play La Sabia in the
morning because it has a mixture of
sadness, sea and whiskey...

Sven indecisive drinks the coffe, and asks Miss Captain Coffee Nirvana wether if this is it. Miss. Captain Coffee Nirvana just answers.

MR. CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA (O.S)

In times where we are alone,
sometimes declaring ourselves
incompetents is the best, but still
you got to be aware of the
road, everything you need will come
to you.

Miss. Captain Coffee Nirvana points to the right, Sven walks in that direction, the voices get louder while he gets closer and closer.

He becomes weak and has a difficulty to walk until he falls. Sven lies on the floor with his eyes closed (CU of his face). He hears murmurs and voices again, this time very close, he feels a deep pain, takes a deep breath, is confused and scared, he doesn't know what is happening and can't leave.

Suddenly Sven opens his eyes and is in what it looks like a hospital room, a very white room.

The EMT, comes in and tells him how happy she is to know that he is OK.

Sven notices the EMT has a notebook with her and she gives it to him, she tells him that this could be the beginning of a new adventure.

Sven takes the notebook and writes: "An Ambulance Made of Whiskey".

Budget

	Quantity	fee	Subtotal	Acct. Total
Story and Script	1	-	-	-
Producer	1	-	-	-
Director	1	-	-	-
Actors	7	-	-	-
Extras	9	-	-	-
PRODUCTION				
Camera operator	1	-	-	-
Gaffer	2	-	-	-
Grip	2	-	-	-
Sound Recordist	1	-	-	-
Art Designer	1	-	-	-
LOCATIONS				
Cast and crew meals	24			800
Misc. Expense	-	-	-	100
PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT				
Camera	1			
Lighting kitt	2			
Sound kitt	2			

ART DIRECTION				
props				300
Set dressing				800
Makeup supplies	-	-	-	-
Wardrobe	-	-	-	-
SOUND AND MUSIC				
Composer	-	-	-	-
			TOTAL	2000

Timeline

Title: An Ambulance made of Whiskey

Director: María Mejía Yepes

Advisor: Jack Beck

Start Date: 4. 22.13

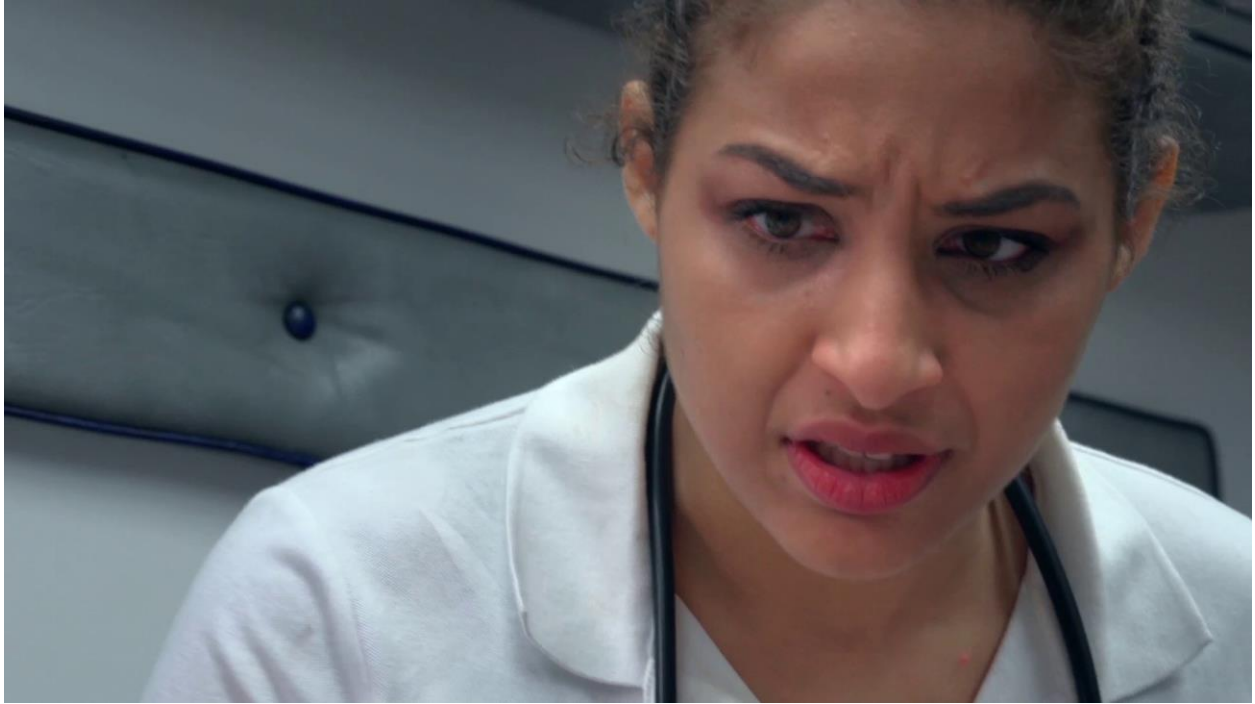
End Date: 5.15.14

Run Time: 15 minutes

Activities	May 2013	June 2013	July 2013	Aug 2013	Sept 2013	Oct 2013	Nov 2013	Dec 2013	Jan 2013	Feb 2013	Mar 2013	Apr 2013	May 2013
Script													
Assembling Crew													
Location Scouting													
Auditions													
Shoot													
editing													
Pick ups													
Collecting sounds													
Picture locked													
Music													
Sound (Foley, SD)													

Stills









AN AMBULANCE MADE OF WHISKEY

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the MFA degree in the
School of Film and Animation,
Rochester Institute of Technology

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RON
DUFORT

ELISABETTA
SANINO D'AMANDA

TIANA
DUNHAM

I only remember bar lights...

AN AMBULANCE MADE OF WHISKEY

A FILM BY VICKY MEJIA YEPES INSPIRED ON THE BOOK OPIO EN LAS NUBES

BLUE TURTLE PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS A FILM BY VICKY MEJIA YEPES "AN AMBULANCE MADE OF WHISKEY" RON DUFORT TIANA DUNHAM AND ELISABETTA SANINO D'AMANDA
MUSIC BY JULIAN BENAVIDES DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY TIANYI WANG PRODUCED BY STEPHANIE CLARK INSPIRED ON THE BOOK OPIO EN LAS NUBES BY RAFAEL CHAPARRO AND PUBLISHED BY TROPIC EDITORES DIRECTED BY VICKY MEJIA YEPES

www.facebook.com/lanambulancemadefwhiskey

An Ambulance made of Whiskey

by: Vicky Mejía Yepes

Rafael Chaparro

OPIO EN LAS NUBES

CHAPTER 2

Una ambulancia de Whiskey

Vicky Mejía Yepes

BLACK SCREEN

STREET SOUNDS, MUSIC FROM A CLOSE BAR, PEOPLE TALKING, CARS PASSING BY. AMBULANCE SIREN.

EXT. STREET FRONT OF X BAR - NIGHT

SVEN'S POV - LYING ON THE STREET

SVEN (35) sees people walking around and screaming, it seems an accident just happened but everything is blurry. Suddenly, a lady dressed in white gets closer, while two guys bring something to carry a body. The lady dressed in white is MARTINA (26) a young nurse.

MARTINA
Clear the way! please.
(to Sven)
Hello Sir. My name is Martina, can
you tell me yours?

Sven doesn't respond, instead he looks to the sides, and notices people around, staring at him and whispering. Martina (26), keeps talking to Sven but he doesn't understand what she says, her face looks blurry from Sven's perspective, the only part that is clear for him are her red lips, Sven follows them hypnotized, while they are moving in slow motion. Sven looks around and notices an old scar on his wrist.

SVEN(V.O)
My name is Sven and I died
yesterday or maybe last week. I
really don't know...

Sven looks to the people around him once more.

SVEN(V.O)
Are they laughing? or crying

Sven is lifted by the two Male nurses that came with Martina. He notices an old man on the distance dressed in white, drinking coffee, staring and smiling at him. Sven is moved into the ambulance.

INT.AMBULANCE - SECONDS LATER

Sven lies on a litter, he has an oxygen mask on, while Martina tries to keep him conscious.

(CONTINUED)

MARTINA

Do you remember what happened?

Sven shakes his head no, he tries to stand up and Martina stops him.

NEW ANGLE - SVEN POV

Sven stares at Martina while she talks to the male nurses, he looks at her hand holding his and again notices the old scar on his wrist, turns it to see the time on his watch is 12:00 am.

SVEN V.O

Several times I tried... it didn't happen...

I wasn't trying today... You'll never know what you going to get.

INT. BAR - SVEN MONTAGE

Sven is drinking whiskey, checks the time and is midnight, then looks at a syringe with a brown liquid inside, which he is about to use.

SVEN(V.O)

Clock marks 12:00 am...

Probably was a poisonous injection in my veins.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT SVEN MONTAGE

Sven looks up, he is with two guys hitting him, and one of them is about to hit his head with a bottle of whiskey.

SVEN (V.O)

Someone finally shut me up.

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUES

Martina notices that Sven's eyes are lost, she tries to keep him awake. And injects him with adrenaline.

MARTINA

Can you remember your name?

SVEN

I only remember bar lights, a bathroom with vomit everywhere and a song "Contigo o sin ti".

(CONTINUED)

MALE NURSE1

Did you check in his wallet for a
contact number?

MARTINA

I did it already.

Martina checks again and notices a bump on his left ankle
under his sock, she removes the sock and finds his wallet.

She finds his business card, it says Sven Zimmer.

MARTINA

It's Sven Zimmer, the writer. I
haven't heard from him in a long
time.

MALE NURSE1

The last thing I heard was his
battle for money with his family.

MALE NURSE2

Those are the only things you hear
about him. I wouldn't be surprised
if the media is waiting in the
hospital already.

NEW ANGLE - Sven's POV

MALE NURSE1 (28) figure moves in and out of focus, the pitch
of his voice changes also on and off from lower to normal.

MALE NURSE1

Too much heroin, too much alcohol,
too much sadness, shit!

Sven sees a guy dressed in white, standing behind Martina,
this guy looks very peaceful, smiling, he is around 60.

SVEN

What are you doing here?

Martina turns to Sven.

MARTINA

I'm here to help you sir.

SVEN

Not you...

He looks behind her.

(CONTINUED)

SVEN

You.

MARTINA

Stay calm, everything will be
alright.

Sven notices that the lights behind Martina change to a different color, her red lips are brighter. Her voice sounds echoey.

MARTINA

Relax... think of a blue sky.

Her voice turns sometimes like Sven's, and goes back to hers.

MARTINA

Dream with a field full of oranges
and mangoes, a rainy morning with
blackbirds, think whatever you
want...

Suddenly the lights behind her stop and everything goes back to the way she looked before.

MARTINA

Mr. Zimmer is there anybody that I
can call?

SVEN

No, there is no one, don't worry.
You're the only one.

EXTREME CLOSE UP - SVEN'S FACE

Sven looks almost unconscious, he barely sees Martina, he smiles at her.

SVEN'S POV - INT AMBULANCE

Martina turns his wrist and discovers his scar.

MARTINA

Mr. Zimmer do you remember what
this is?

SVEN

I like to feel like a stuffed
animal. Today I'm a stuffed animal
gunned by the siren lights and the
dizziness...

SVEN'S IMAGINATION - EXT. CITY

We see a shot of the city during the night. Sven is on a side walk, one of his wrists is bleeding while he smells it and licks it. he hears voices in the background.

LADY V.O

I'm so sorry, I can't be with you anymore.

EDITOR V.O

You suck man! non of these pages show me anything, I can't do much for you.

DAD V.O

I don't want to see you again, today I lost my son.

INT.AMBULANCE - SECONDS LATER

Martina tries to keep Sven awake.

MARTINA

Mr. Zimmer, I need you to stay awake, please

SVEN

It feels like I'm shitting diamonds, I want to leave.

Martina holds his arm, the same one where he scar is.

MARTINA

Hang in there, Sweetie, we are almost there.

Sven keeps quiet, and stares at Martina.

FADE OUT

Sven's imagination

EXT . WOODS

A big tree it's being stabbed with big syringes by two beings dressed in black with black faces.

CUT TO

(CONTINUED)

Sven and Martina are sitting under the same tree, Sven's wrist has a needle that is connected to a white long cable that doesn't have an end. His wrist is being held by Martina, but this time she looks different, her lips are red.

SVEN(V.O)

She looks like in the movies,
amazing eyes, fine hands.

She is holding an injection and flirts with him.

SVEN(V.O)

She smells like blood and roses.
That kind of scent that... makes me
dizzy, drives me crazy, that
perfume that taste like
midnight, and bloody wrists.

Sven touches Martina's face, and gets extremely close.

SVEN

Look at me baby, before I die.

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUES

Suddenly they are back again in the ambulance and Martina keeps trying to awake Sven.

MARTINA

You're not going to die, you're
gonna be fine. Don't worry.

SVEN

Your face seems familiar, maybe I
saw you at the park? or probably I
had seen you waiting for the bus?

Martina shakes her head no, and places a thermometer in his mouth, while Sven looks at her body like if he desires her and stops in her chest.

SVEN V.O

Probably the heat from her body
reminded me of a sunny morning.

MARTINA

I don't like parks, and I have a
car.

(CONTINUED)

SVEN

I know, I've seen you before.

Martina looks to the front where the male nurses are.

SVEN V.O

She has the look of somebody who walks on the streets.

SVEN

Her face looks like somebody who sings "Pasar la noche juntos".

MARTINA

What do you mean by that? I look like what?

Sven realizes that he said what he thought.

SVEN

I think you're very cute.

Sven tries to sit down, she stops him, but he seems very strong.

SVEN

Cutie do you want me?

Martina struggles to keep him still.

MARTINA

Of course dear, I want you... to stay still!.

He lies down and smiles at her. The lights of the street reflect on Martina's face, and the sound of the siren can be perceived. Suddenly everything gets blurry, and the sounds of the street becomes distorted.

SVEN V.O

Shit! this is it, I'm losing it.

INT. BLACK SPACE

Everything turns black and quiet.

SVEN V.O

Now what? Why am I the only one who never knows what to do?

The situation remains the same.

(CONTINUED)

SVEN V.O

I can't believe it! Even in my own
fucking death I'm lost. Where is my
light at the end of the tunnel?

Suddenly there is a white spot a small light.

SVEN V.O

There it is! I heard you see your
whole life in seconds, 32 years
have to have something.

Just one best seller, 6 times in
the hospital for unfortunate
situations with certain injections,
certain asses, and lately I think
certain bottles of whiskey with
something else, a damn degree in
literature and philosophy, that
taught me that it's better to be an
ignorant, than knowing more than
you can chew.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT - SUSPENDED TIME

Suddenly the lights are back, Sven is in Martina's arms,
nobody else is around. She kisses his forehead and rubs his
face. They are sitting in the middle of a street, the lights
of the cars can be seen in Martina's face.

SVEN

I've always wanted to die like
this, violently, with whiskey
draining through my guts, a
nocturnal death, and, of
course, with a nurse asking me, if
we could spend the night together.

Martina continues kissing him and smiling.

MARTINA

I want to kiss you in the middle of
your bloody dreams.

Sven nods. The siren sound can be perceived from the
distance. Sven looks to the side where the siren can be
heard.

SVEN V.O

The siren is howling like a hurt
female dog that runs, breaking the
hot breath of the night.

(CONTINUED)

Sven and Martina get close to kiss, he holds her face, the lights are on and off. The sound of the siren becomes louder.

SVEN

The night is decomposing. Is
falling in pieces around me like an
absurd card game where nobody wins,
or at least not me.

Martina holds his hand and shows him his wrist with the needle in it.

MARTINA

Relax sweetie pie, nothing will
happen.

The sound of the TRAFFIC comes in the background, it is perceived as if he was inside the ambulance and the two male nurses can be heard.

MALE NURSE1 O.S

Get out of the way! we're losing
him! shit.

After Sven hears that, he holds Martina.

SVEN

Please hold me tight, don't let me
go.

Martina doesn't react to what he says, she just smiles, and keeps rubbing his head. Sven holds her face to keep her attention.

SVEN

Don't leave me, I need you.

She taps him on the chest.

MARTINA

Of course honey, just hang in
there.

She smiles at him, and Sven moves his head to the side, trying to find something to scape, his eyes are lost.

INT. HEART WITH HAND - CONTINUES

There is a Black space, with a woman's hand moving slowly over something that seems to be a human heart with blood.

BREATHING SLOWLY SOUND

SVEN V.O

Body, Night, Blood... A warm and invisible hand inside me, scratches and takes out pieces of light and silence, I am fading slowly.

FANTASY SEQUENCE - PITCH BLACK

Everything turns pitch black, and we are seeing through Sven's eyes. He blinks and sees skin-color, blurry spots that move over him.

MALE VOICE

What is your blood type?

Sven takes a long pause and responds very relax.

SVEN

The red one, the one that usually poor and sad people have, or maybe a lonely wolf, or maybe a sad fly wandering around shit.

MALE VOICE

I need Naloxone 5cc.

SVEN

My blood type? I hate that obsession of classifying everything.

MALE VOICE

What are you talking about? This is serious.

DREAM SEQUENCE - PITCH BLACK WITH PINK SPOT

We see the blurry spot moving, sometimes that spot turns purple and red. Sometimes Martin's image can be seen dancing provocatively.

SVEN V.O

I'm feeling a very deep desire of being with her, dancing close to
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SVEN V.O (cont'd)
each other under the lyrics; "Pasar
la Noche juntos".

DREAM SEQUENCE - INT. MARTINA'S COUCH

Martina is on a couch, drinking and smiling.

SVEN V.O
kissing her in the middle of her
white teeth and having sex on the
beach.

Sven sits besides her and she moves closer to him, places
her hand on his leg and leans her head on his shoulder.

SVEN V.O
Or just sitting on her hands full
of trees.

They kiss and look at each other.

SVEN
I don't know if my name was Sven or
Axel or if is Friday or Saturday or
probably Thursday morning.

MARTINA
Relax.. Yo puedo vivir contigo o
sin tí...

SVEN
I don't know if I really want to
die or just bleed.

MARTINA
Relax.. I can vivir contigo or
without you.

SVEN
I love your perfume, I love the way
you inject me, the way you monitor
my pulse, I love your hair, the
taste of your mouth, I love that
clock that shows midnight.

Martina touches his face.

SVEN
love the way you touch my face,
Love when you say; "relax
sweetie everything will be
alright, think of something nice".

(CONTINUED)

MARTINA

Relax sweetie...

SVEN

I don't know if I am O positive or negative, or if I'm black or white, sambo, mulatto, Christian, Buddhist, Atheist or a wage - earner, a communist on the Peking line, or communist on the Moscow line, I can't remember if I like coffee with two or three sugar cubes.

Martina moves and sits on Sven's lap facing him.

MARTINA

Relax! babe... I can live with or without you.

And when she leans back her background turn into a black room.

INT. BLACK ROOM

Everything is dark, there is PEOPLE TALKING in the background. Suddenly a barbie figure comes into the screen, talking to another one.

DOCTOR1

Breathing shallow...Blood pressure 70 over 40... pulse is very weak... 65... I think. I can hardly feel it...

DOCTOR 2

We need to jump him, 20cc's Adrenaline STAT, We're losing him!

DOCTOR 1

OK. Clear. I need to get an airway going... got it!

Sven turns his head to the door and sees Martina standing at it, she sends him a kiss with her hands, Sven is so confused and bad at this point that his thoughts become public because he is saying them out loud.

SVEN V.O

A kiss with the sweet tip of her fingers. I want to catch it

(CONTINUED)

Sven stretches his arms as much as he can do to catch the kiss and smiles.

SVEN V.O

I feel something warm in my hand.

Martina leaves the room.

SVEN V.O

Shit! I wish I wouldn't die, I wish
to be the driver of that ambulance
to see her every day.

The Barbie dolls walk around him.

SVEN

Do you want me today? Do you want
to kiss me as much as I do? Let's
go to my place and have some
whiskey.

Suddenly one of the barbie dolls gets extremely close to him.

SUSPENDED SEQUENCE. SVEN'S MIND

Everything turns black, and quiet, Sven can hear his own heart and blood circulating.

EXT. GREEN FIELD - DAY

Sven opens his eyes and notices he is surrounded by trees, he feels the grass in his hands, sits up and looks around. Nobody is there. He stands up and walks. After walking for a while he notices a lady sitting on a bench drinking coffee, she waves at him.

Sven walks towards her.

SVEN

Excuse me can you tell me where I
am?

She hugs him, and gives him a business card, it says; Miss Captain Coffee Nirvana, she answers that you're looking for.

SVEN

Miss Captain Coffee Nirvana?

(CONTINUED)

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA
The same one dear!. It's been a
long time. How is everything going?

SVEN
Do I know you?

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA
I can't believe that you forgot
about those times.

SVEN
What times?

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA
We used to have our moments, we had
an amazing time, it was our golden
one.

Remember when we wrote Opium in the
Clouds? It was after dating that
girl Amarilla.

SVEN
Who are you? how do you know about
Amarilla?, How do you know about
me?

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA
A lot of people used to know about
you. In fact the only one who
doesn't know about you.
(Laughs)
is you.

SVEN
Look, can you just tell me where I
am or what the hell is going on?

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA
If you knew about you, You'd know
where you are.

SVEN
I don't have time for this

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA
My dear, you have a lot of time.

SVEN
What are you talking about?

(CONTINUED)

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA
Seems that you decided to cancel
your membership without sending the
proper forms.

Sven turns his back and leaves.

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA
Are you looking for Martina? I
might be able to help you. Come
dear let's have some drinks.

She hands him a cup of coffee.

SVEN
Do you know her?

Sven looks to the cup of coffee.

SVEN
What is this?

Sven looks to the singular mug with hesitation.

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA
It's coffee. What were you
expecting?

Sven hesitates to drink it

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA
Drink it, is not going to break
your stomach. Go ahead It's good
quality 100% Colombian.

Sven stares at her confused.

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA
I will help you son, just as
always. Go ahead and drink.

Sven drinks and joins Captain coffee nirvana in the bench.
Then Captain moves her hands like conducting music in the
air, and suddenly, a piece of music starts to play.

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA
I love to play music in the morning
because it has a mixture of
sadness, sea and coffee. Do you
like it?

SVEN

Am I dead?

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA

kind of, but not yet, do you want to die?

SVEN

I used to.. I... met someone

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA

Real? or surreal.

SVEN

Surreal, but I would like to give it a try.

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA

Look kid, nobody promised us a garden of roses, we came to deal with the danger of being alive... In times where nobody listens, in times where everybody is against everyone. Sometime we feel alone and it seems that the best solution is to declare ourselves incompetents, but still you gotta like be aware of the road, looking every single thing that happens, everything you need will come to you.

SVEN

Am I gonna Live?

CAPTAIN COFFEE NIRVANA

That's something you'll have to decide my son.

Captain coffee nirvana hugs Sven and kisses his forehead, then points to his right, and Sven walks over there.

SVEN

What am I looking for?

Nobody answers, Sven turns and Captain Coffee Nirvana has disappeared. He keeps walking, after a while he hears a female voice. He keeps walking and the voice turns clear.

FEMALE V.O

Relax Sweetie, Relax...

Sven stops and tries to find where is that voice coming from, the voice turns louder and louder. Along with this voice we hear CITY SOUND fx, AND PEOPLE VOICES. It becomes unbearable. Sven covers his ears, closes his eyes and falls down.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Sven wakes up in a hospital room, looks around and there is no one. Suddenly Martina comes to the room.

MARTINA
How do you feel?

SVEN
I don't know, better. I guess.

MARTINA
It was pretty intense.

SVEN
I know, I'm very sorry about...

MARTINA
It's alright, You're fine and
that's what it matters now.

Martina shows him a notebook, and places it on his lap.

SVEN
What's this?

MARTINA
I thought you might need this after
such a night. Take care, it was
nice to meet you.

Sven holds the notebook, stares at it for a while and writes on the first page; An Ambulance made of Whiskey.